

Building A Community Of Writers

WRITEBOSTON

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Betty Southwick, WriteBoston Director giving Mayor Menino an Institute T-Shirt.

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McCormack Middle School 8th Graders Meet Their WriteBoston Electronic Pen Pals at Sovereign Bank

On June 9th, Sovereign Bank sponsored a luncheon for McCormack 8th grade student E-Pal participants who completed their science fiction short stories.

At this luncheon students met their adult E-pals, with whom they have been emailing throughout the spring. This correspondence focused on improving student writing within the context of their science class.

WriteBoston began its first electronic pen pal project at McCormack in collaboration with their business partner Sovereign Bank. Richard Bausemer, Senior Compliance Manager, recruited 28+ volunteers and worked closely with WriteBoston in the implementation of this project. McCormack science teacher, Jan Mattimoe, joined the project willingly, promoting writing within her science curriculum.

Students and their E-Pals wrote to each other about their Science Fair Projects in January. The rest of this spring was spent communicating about Sci-Fi short stories. Students completed their stories with input from their E-pals regarding content, story lines, as well as character and setting development. WriteBoston's McCormack writing coach worked closely with all of the students to help them edit and critique their papers.

Five exemplary Sci-Fi stories were chosen to be read aloud at the event. Students Haidy Pena, Ha Pham, Yennifer Senices, Telisha Gillard and Jaimee Singh each stood up in front of their peers and the Sovereign employees and proudly read from their stories.

Sovereign also provided a bound collection of short stories for each of the students and volunteers. All of the students are now published, which is a key goal and of WriteBoston. Students Ha Pham and Johnathon Lopes designed the book cover.

Who We Are

Officially launched by Mayor Menino in January 2002, WriteBoston aims to mobilize schools, families and community agencies to dramatically improve writing proficiency among Boston middle and high school students.

3 Core Components:

- In-school writing support
- After-school writing enrichment
- Community awareness and involvement

3 Schools:

- McCormack Middle School
- Boston Community Leadership Academy
- Odyssey High School

Summer Internships at the Boston Globe, the Boston Herald and Boston Phoenix

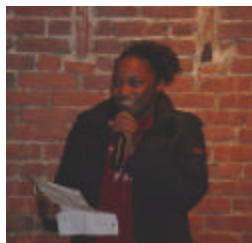
Alejandra Morel of BCLA, Patricia Gilmore and Jazmine Jones of English High spent their summer learning firsthand the challenges and excitement of the newspaper world. They learned how a newsroom operates, conducted research on stories, and had an opportunity to be published. These three young women were given paid internships by the Hiatt Family in honor of journalist and author Caroline Knapp.

WriteBoston Receives \$5,000 Starbucks Foundation Grant

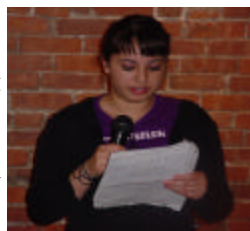
WriteBoston recently received a \$5,000 grant from The Starbucks Foundation. WriteBoston used the grant to work with the managers at Boston's Stuart Street Starbucks to initiate a mentoring program that connects Starbucks employees with students from Boston Community Leadership Academy. With the grant, WriteBoston is able to support a new literary magazine, showcasing the work that Starbucks

mentors and students work on together.

To culminate the year, the students and the Starbucks partners held a poetry slam event on June 12 at Starbucks. 30 students from the WriteBoston program were given the chance to showcase their poetry during an 'Open Mic' session in front of a live audience. WriteBoston hired Simone Beaubien and Craig Nelson, both prominent in poetry slam circles, to lead the poetry slam event.



Jamila Smoot



Jackie Guzman

WriteBoston Summer Writing Institute

Explore Boston Through Writing



Milourdes and Cleonice on the Georges Island ferry with the Boston sky line.

During the week of July 7, WriteBoston held its first Summer Writing Institute, 'Explore Boston Through Writing.' Almost twenty students from participating WriteBoston schools - Boston Community Leadership Academy, Odyssey High and McCormack Middle - learned more about their city and improved their writing skills with the support of writing coaches and various renowned guest authors and speakers.

The focus of the Summer Institute was improving student writing and experimenting with various genres such as news writing, descriptive writing, and poetry. Each day's activities and speakers highlighted these types of writing and inspired students to consider the importance of writing in numerous careers. The mornings consisted of informational and historical tours of the venues and interviews with individuals who use writing in the workplace. In the afternoons, WriteBoston writing coaches focused on the genre of the day, teaching a mini-lesson and providing the assignment. Students used the remainder of the afternoon to draft pieces, confer with staff and peers, and edit their work for publication.

At the Boston Globe, students studied feature articles and explored interviewing and editing skills. Fenway Park provided the perfect venue for practicing writing from different points of view. A day at City Hall exposed students to the demanding world of the speech writer, and students wrote and delivered their own speeches in a Boston Redevelopment Authority Board Room.

After meeting the tough deadline of the speech writer, students had a more relaxing day on George's Island, where they practiced writing poetry and using descriptive language. The vibrant campus of Harvard University provided an excellent opportunity to explore characterization and write sketches of individuals they observed on campus.

WriteBoston Summer Institute participants were lucky to listen to diverse and talented professionals who all use writing in their daily lives. While at the Boston Globe, Op Ed writer Derrick Jackson spoke with students about getting "the scoop" and told them to "cause trouble" when they write, as any investigative reporter should. City Editor Marilyn Garateix told students of the importance of accuracy and fairness, along with the need to continuously rewrite and edit their writing.

After touring Fenway Park on Tuesday, learning its history and sitting in the green monster seats, students heard from guest speaker Bill Littlefield, author, sports commentator, and host of NPR's *Only A Game*. Littlefield advised that originality makes a great story, and if the writer is excited about his/her story the reader will be engaged. Charles Steinberg, Vice President of the Red Sox's Public Affairs, told students he never imagined the high expectations of his eighth grade English teacher and the requirement of weekly essays would land him such a prestigious position today. Echoing what each speaker said during the week, Steinberg encouraged students to find their passion and write about it. He explained to students that being able to articulate how you feel inside is the beauty of writing.

After touring City Hall, Mayor Menino's speechwriter, Rosalie O'Brien, gave a lesson in speech writing. Students learned the importance of delivery, as well as audience, time and location. After interviewing and eating lunch with Mayor Menino, students

shared their own speeches with each other.

On Thursday at George's Island, Park Ranger Chris Benedetto led a tour of Fort Warren and informed students of the history, military life in the fort during the Civil War, and the ghost story of the Lady in Black. Benedetto used historical letters to demonstrate the importance of writing and took the group to a beautiful quiet space on the coastline where students wrote poetry using similes and metaphors.



WriteBoston Students pose with Bill Littlefield at Fenway Park.

Finally on Friday, students toured Harvard University then met Rick Weissbourd and Jake Murray, WriteBoston founders and Steering Committee members. Both men stressed the importance of writing as a thinking tool. Murray told students "writing is thinking on paper,... when you write you are sharpening your mind." He told students if one can think, one can go anywhere in life. Weissbourd explained how he and Mayor Menino created WriteBoston in the attempt to improve middle and high school students' writing skills.

After speaking about the importance of writing, the WriteBoston visionaries listened to each student read one piece of writing created during the institute. Carlos Curry, BCLA sophomore wrote in his piece titled *The Truth*, "I like meeting new people and learning new things. So this writing camp was not a waste of my summer. I was experiencing things that I'll never forget."

Perspective Writing by Milourdes Augustin

My heart is pounding. Sweat is dripping from my forehead. The crowd is in silence and all eyes are on me. "It is all up to me now, the fate of my team moving onto the playoffs is on my shoulders," I whisper to myself. I look up at the pitcher.

I see him getting into position, ready to strike at any moment. Fear fills my heart immediately. Then suddenly, the pitch is thrown. I see the ball coming at me and for that moment, time seems to be frozen. The ball seems as though it is moving slowly, approaching me. I think to myself, "this is it, this decides everything."

Suddenly, the ball comes at me with full speed. I tell my nerves to calm down and mutter to the butterflies in my stomach to take a hike. I concentrate and with all my might, I hit the ball. The crowd cheers with excitement, but I close my eyes. I don't know whether they are cheering because I had let my team down, or if we have won. Afraid to face reality I take a heavy sigh and open eyes, not knowing whether or not it is a good idea.



Carlos, standing in the Green Monster seats at Fenway Park.



Scavenger Hunt at the Boston Globe

A Feature Article by Cleonice Costa Mendes

As the sixteen participants of the WriteBoston program arrive at the Boston Globe on July 7th, they are briefly introduced to what they would be doing. To start things off the students went on a scavenger hunt for items in the newspaper. The object of this game is to get to know each participant better; whatever team gets all of the items on the list first wins.

As the day goes on the participants go on a tour of the Boston Globe, they view a film on the history of the paper and they go see the pressrooms. After seeing how the paper is made, they get to see how the paper is pushed; robots are programmed to push the paper, because the rolls of paper weigh about 1,200 to 1,300 pounds each.

After lunch, two reporters came by to talk with the students and answer questions. The participants got very good advice from Derrick Jackson. When I spoke with one of them, Milourdes Augustin, she said, "I think this program is a great opportunity for young writers who want to improve their writing skills."

The purpose of the WriteBoston program is to help students explore Boston through writing, to help them become better writers and become more confident about their writing. After each day, the staff helps the participants write their articles, poems, etc. In the end, students are more confident in their ability to write well.

Character Sketch by Trevor Cargill

The person I observe is a female. Her hair is blonde and short. It is straight, like a skyscraper. Her eyes are dark and are hard to see under her black umbrella. She is light skinned, thin and skinny. Her earrings are silver with blue stones in them. As she talks her face is smiling, she seems happy to be with the older woman. She wears a long, black, sleeveless dress; she seems tall as she enters the coffee shop. She laughs and smiles, while she drinks her coffee, with her mother sitting across from her.



Trevor, Jaimee, Ranger Benedetto, Alexia and Milordess at Georges Island.

A Poem of George's Island By Troy Harding

**Gorgeous view of the water
and boats
Every soldier hears
Outrageous sounds and sees the
Rolling bridge over the
moat and
Great trap doors killing
Everyone
Seen in the murder holes.**

**If an unknown
Soldier is seen
Loitering
A
New face will become old
and
Dead**



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“Writing is thinking. When you write you are sharpening your mind.”
Jake Murray

BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

WE ARE ON THE WEB
WWW.WRITEBOSTON.ORG

WriteBoston Holds Professional Development Seminar

On August 27th, WriteBoston held its first professional development seminar for WriteBoston teachers and staff. Hosted by the Boston Globe, ten teachers and writing coaches from Boston Community Leadership Academy, McCormack Middle School, and the Odyssey High School at South Boston collaborated to improve writing proficiency of Boston Public middle and high school students.

This day long seminar introduced teachers new to WriteBoston to the program, to veteran teachers and the staff. WriteBoston teachers were able to look back over the first year of the program, and see what achievements were accomplished by the students who participated.

Topics of discussion for the day included writing across the curriculum, publishing student work, preparing for an author speaker series, and incorporating business partners into a writing classroom.

Teachers left the WriteBoston professional development workshop with curriculum and lesson ideas, a leather-bound dictionary, and many classroom texts donated from Houghton Mifflin.

Continued professional development workshops will be provided throughout the school year, on a monthly basis, to the participating teachers. These monthly workshops will provide teachers more in depth instruction on specific programs.

WriteBoston Statistics

What a year! In our first year, WriteBoston worked with schools, families, businesses, newspapers, and authors to highlight writing and improve young people's attitudes and writing skills. Here's a sample of our successes:

- 3 Journalism internships
- 4 Parent events
- 14 Author visits
- 3 Pen pal programs
- 4 Boston Public Schools
- 1 Poetry slam
- 14 After school participants
- 11 Teachers
- 330 Students
- 20 Summer camp participants
- 1 Literary magazine
- 35 Pen pals
- 3 End-of-year celebrations
- 2 Mayor visits
- 117 Students published in schools, magazines, online, newsletters, or community newspapers

WriteBoston wants to thank everyone who contributed to our first, exciting year!